



Questions and Answers About NAEP

Introduction

What is the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)?

Often referred to as *The Nation's Report Card*, NAEP is the only ongoing national research study designed to evaluate what America's students know and can do in various key subject areas. Federal law requires the development and administration of NAEP. NAEP is administered by the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (NCES).

What is the purpose of NAEP?

The purpose of NAEP is to provide national and state information on the performance of America's students in reading, mathematics, writing, science, and other key subject areas. NAEP is also designed to assess changes over time in reading and mathematics achievement.

What is included in NAEP?

NAEP includes a range of assessments and surveys used to provide national and state-level information about students' educational experiences, teachers' characteristics and practices, school climate and other important educational variables. NAEP also includes field tests and periodic or special interest studies such as the high school transcript study.

What NAEP studies take place in 2007-08?

NAEP studies are conducted every year. In 2007-08, NAEP will focus on the long-term trend assessments in reading and mathematics. The results from these assessments will indicate national changes in performance over time for students ages 9, 13, and 17. In addition, NAEP will include a grade eight arts assessment. These results will be

reported for the nation and specific geographic regions of the country. Finally, NAEP will include field tests in reading, mathematics, and science for grades four, eight, and twelve. These field tests are being conducted as part of the development process for questions that will be used in the NAEP assessments to be administered in 2009.

How do the long-term trend assessments differ from those used in the national or state NAEP?

The NAEP long-term trend assessments have remained essentially unchanged since first administered in the early 1970s. This allows the results to be used to monitor trends in student performance over time. The state and national NAEP (also known as the main NAEP assessments) change every decade to reflect changes in the curriculum in the nation's schools. Whereas the long-term trend assessments focus on reading and mathematics, the state and national NAEP cover a broader range of subject areas such as writing and science.

NAEP Participation

Is participation voluntary or mandatory?

The reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, also known as the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, states school districts and schools that receive Title I funds are required to participate in the NAEP reading and mathematics assessments of grades four and eight (and any related field tests). All other NAEP assessments, including the long-term trend, are voluntary for school districts and schools. Participation in all of the assessments is essential so the results accurately reflect the performance of America's students.

**How is the NAEP sample selected?**

The state NAEP coordinator at the California Department of Education (CDE) receives a list of schools selected for the national sample from NCES, the NAEP test administrator. The students sampled are selected by age (or grade) to represent the nation. Sample sizes for the long-term trend assessments are smaller than those samples selected for the main NAEP assessments. Approximately one out of every five school districts in California can anticipate having at least one school participate in NAEP in 2007-08.

How are school districts and schools notified that they have been selected to participate?

The state NAEP coordinator sends a notification letter and response form to each school district superintendent of the selected schools. (Please see Tables 1, 2, and 3 on page 5 for the notification windows for fall 2007 and spring 2008 NAEP assessments.) Tables 1, 2, and 3 contain a breakdown of each assessment as follows:

- Table 1 – NAEP notification and assessment dates by age and subjects for the long-term trend assessments
- Table 2 – NAEP notification and assessment dates for the grade eight arts assessment
- Table 3 – NAEP notification and assessment dates for the field tests

Beginning in June, districts receive advanced notification of the testing dates for all schools.

The initial notification letter requests that a district NAEP coordinator be assigned and that a local process for handling materials be determined. Each school selected for NAEP participation is asked to designate a school NAEP coordinator. The school NAEP coordinator is typically a school testing coordinator or counselor. The school

coordinator may also be the principal or other staff member appointed by the principal.

The list of districts with sampled schools for fall 2007 and spring 2008 is posted on the NAEP Web page at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/nr/>.

What factors make a school eligible or ineligible to participate?

Size is not a factor in determining NAEP eligibility. Even if a school has only one student who meets the eligibility criteria for a NAEP test, the school qualifies for NAEP participation. Charter and magnet schools are also eligible to participate. Certain types of schools (e.g., continuation, independent study, ungraded), however, are not eligible to participate. Questions about school eligibility should be directed to the state NAEP coordinator.

What are students asked to do?

Students selected to participate in NAEP are assessed in only one subject area (e.g., reading, mathematics, the arts). During the testing session, all students respond to a short survey designed to provide information about their experiences with the subject areas. From beginning to end, NAEP participation takes between 90 and 120 minutes. Students are encouraged to remain in the room until all testing is complete.

What kinds of questions should students expect to see?

Questions for the NAEP long-term trend assessment in reading feature short passages and focus on locating specific information, making inferences, and identifying the main ideas of passages. The long-term trend assessment in mathematics focuses on basic computational skills in four content areas: numbers and operations, measurement, geometry, and algebra. On the long-term trend assessments, students respond to questions



in multiple-choice, short answer, and extended answer formats. Students are not asked to show or explain their work.

Similarly, state and national assessments include multiple-choice questions, questions that call for written answers, and questions that require the use of calculators and other materials. Student responses that require writing can range from a few words to more than a page. All materials needed for the test administration are provided to students.

Examples of the types of questions included on NAEP tests can be found at

<http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/itmrls/>
(Outside Source)

What can school districts and schools do to improve the participation of students?

School districts and schools may consider implementing the following strategies to improve the participation of students:

- Provide snacks or meals to participating students prior to or after NAEP testing.
- Mail or distribute 3x5 cards to students notifying them of the date, time, and location of NAEP testing. These cards are available from the NAEP field staff who visits the school prior to testing.
- Select a weekday that is known to have higher attendance for the NAEP testing.
- Elect to conduct NAEP testing on a date that is not too close to the dates of other testing (i.e., California High School Exit Exam).
- Ensure teachers and other school staff know which students need to be released for NAEP testing and the reporting location for these students.

Please contact the state NAEP coordinator to discuss other strategies that may help improve student participation.

Does NAEP accommodate students with disabilities and English learners?

Since 1996, NAEP began allowing accommodations for students with disabilities and English learners. The NAEP samples include students assessed with accommodations, and most of the accommodations they received are the same as those provided in state or school district assessments. Parents and guardians who have students with disabilities or English learners may opt their students out of NAEP testing if NAEP does not offer the appropriate accommodation or if their students do not normally participate in state tests. NAEP state and national results are reported for students who participate in NAEP with accommodations. For a complete list of the accommodations allowed on NAEP assessments, go to http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/about/inclusion.asp#accom_table (Outside Source).

NAEP Preparation Process**What is school district staff asked to do?**

The notification that one or more schools within a school district have been selected for NAEP participation is sent to the district superintendent. This notification also requests that a district NAEP coordinator be identified. The designated district coordinator is the key contact between the state NAEP coordinator and the schools selected for participation within a school district. Among other responsibilities, this coordinator will be asked to distribute NAEP information to schools; work with the school NAEP coordinator to prepare lists of eligible students; and ensure the school coordinator notifies the parents and guardians of the students selected for participation.

**What is school staff asked to do?**

A designated school NAEP coordinator has various administration responsibilities that include working with the district NAEP coordinator, notifying parents or guardians of students selected for NAEP participation, and meeting with the NAEP field staff. Some principals and teachers are asked to complete questionnaires. Teachers of students with disabilities and students with limited English proficiency are asked to complete a questionnaire for each participating student. These teachers may also be asked to:

- Assist in determining the appropriate testing accommodations.
- Remain with their students during the test administration.

Schools selected for NAEP participation are requested to release information about student participation in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP). Are schools authorized to release this information?

Yes. Under the legislation that authorized the NSLP, Congress allowed disclosure of NSLP participation for selected programs. One of the programs authorized to receive this information is NAEP. An explanation of this policy can be found at http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/contracts/pdf/g4_8_ac.pdf (Outside Source).

What are the parent or guardian notification requirements?

In advance of the test administration, school districts and schools must notify all parents or guardians of students selected to participate in NAEP. Federal law requires that parents or guardians be informed that they may exclude their children from participation in the test for any reason and that their children are not required to finish the test or answer all test questions. Any parent or guardian notifications **must** be dated and copies available as follows:

- A copy of the dated notification **must** be provided to the NAEP field staff during the NAEP field staff meeting which takes place prior to the test administration date.
- A copy of parent and guardian letters **must** be kept on file at the school site.

CDE will require e-mail confirmation that the parent/guardian notification has been handled as required.

Modifiable Word versions of sample parent/guardian notification letters and newsletters are available on the NAEP Web page at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/nr/> or the MyNAEP Web site located at <http://www.mynaep.com> (Outside Source).

NAEP Results**When are the results available?**

Results for the various NAEP assessments are released between six months and one year after the administration of the assessments. Because NAEP studies take place on an ongoing basis, results are similarly being released throughout the year. Recent releases include those in U.S. history and civics for students in grades four, eight, and twelve. These and all results are posted on the NAEP Web site at <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/> (Outside Source).

Does NAEP provide individual school or student results?

No. By design, NAEP does not provide results for individual schools or students. NAEP results are reported for the nation, state, and specific regions of the country. They are also reported by grade or age level and for key demographic groups.

**Who uses the NAEP results? How are they used?**

The NAEP results are widely publicized. Each state's performance on NAEP is often presented in comparison with that of other states and the nation. The progress that each state makes from one NAEP assessment year to another is often noted. State boards of education, legislatures, and other education agencies use NAEP results for planning programs that address the specific needs of each state. Research institutions use NAEP

data about student achievement, teacher preparation, instructional techniques, and school experiences to study and report on educational trends and patterns.

How can the state NAEP coordinator be contacted?

The state NAEP coordinator can be reached:

- By phone at 916-319-0332
- By fax at 916-319-0967
- By e-mail at NAEP@cde.ca.gov

Table 1. NAEP Notification and Assessment Dates by Age and Subjects for the Long-Term Trend Assessments

Age	Subjects	Notification Window	Assessment Dates
13	Reading Mathematics	June 2007	October 8, 2007 – December 14, 2007
9	Reading Mathematics	June 2007	January 7, 2008 – March 14, 2008
17	Reading Mathematics	June 2007	March 17, 2008 – May 23, 2008

Table 2. NAEP Notification and Assessment Dates for the Grade Eight Arts Assessment

Grade	Subjects	Notification Window	Assessment Dates
8	Arts	June 2007	January 28, 2008 – March 7, 2008

Table 3. NAEP Notification and Assessment Dates for the Field Tests

Grade	Subjects	Notification Window	Assessment Dates
4, 8, and 12	Reading, Mathematics Science	June 2007	January 28, 2008 – March 7, 2008